

School Violence in South Carolina 1996-1998: An Incident-Based Descriptive Analysis

Violence in our schools has always been a great concern, and has received increasing attention in recent years as a result of several well publicized, horrific incidents. In many jurisdictions, the search for effective remedies has been hindered by the lack of reliable information concerning the extent and nature of crime in our schools. South Carolina has been fortunate in that the South Carolina Department of Education has been systematically collecting information concerning criminal incidents in the public schools since 1991. Additionally, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) has been collecting statewide crime incident reports for years, and has been a fully compliant participant in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) program since South Carolina was part of the pilot program in 1991.

The purpose of this report was to utilize incident-based reporting data to provide a descriptive analysis of the problem of school violence. It is important to understand that, given the variation in data sources and methodology, the findings of this report may vary significantly in a number of respects from other recent reports concerning school violence. These differences in data collection and methodology make meaningful comparison of results between this and other studies problematic.

This report was funded by a grant from the Justice Research and Statistics Association, a non-profit research agency based in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this grant was two-fold. The first objective was to develop a means of extracting specific data-sets from the South Carolina Incident Based Report System (SCIBRS) which is maintained by the SLED. This was accomplished in cooperation with the University of South Carolina's Advanced Solutions Group (ASG), which developed an internet-based data extraction module for this project. The second objective was to analyze those data and produce a report describing the nature and extent of violent crime in South Carolina's schools for the years 1996, 1997 and 1998.